

# CATHOLIC BASHERS SPARED IMUS TREATMENT

In mid-April, talk-show radio host Don Imus was blasted for an on-air racial comment directed at the Rutgers University women's basketball team. There were demands from numerous quarters that Imus be fired—we couldn't help but contrast these calls for Imus' head with the way Catholic-bashing is so often dismissed as "free speech."

Two years ago, Penn Jillette (of the comedy team Penn and Teller) went on Showtime calling Mother Teresa "Mother F-king Teresa" and called the nuns who worked with her "f-king c-ts."

Showtime is owned by Viacom and that is why we wrote to its chief, Sumner Redstone, to register a complaint. He wrote back extolling the merits of "artistic freedom" and "tolerance."

Last year, on Viacom-owned CBS radio, Jillette said Mother Teresa "had this weird kink that I think was sexual," compared the saintly nun to Charles Manson and said she "got her [sexual] kicks watching people suffer and die." Again, nothing was done about this.

In 2005, Bill Maher went on HBO at the time of the death of Pope John Paul II and said, "For those who could not make the funeral, the Vatican has asked that in lieu of flowers, just stop touching your d-k." He also said that the whole story of Jesus, the Virgin Mary and the Resurrection was "grafted from paganism"; he ended by mocking the death of the pope and the upcoming conclave.

The letter we received from HBO said that "it's a free country, and people are free to say silly things—even on HBO."

Right before Easter, the Catholic League protested the chocolate Jesus with his genitals exposed that was to be shown

in the art gallery of the Roger Smith Hotel in midtown Manhattan (located on street level, the public was invited to eat him). Air America radio co-host Cenk Uygur, writing about it on "The Huffington Post," said, "So is the argument that Jesus didn't have ad-k? Or were people offended because it was too big? Too small? Too immaculate? Not immaculate enough?" Regarding Imus' remark, Uygur was much more disturbed, calling it "derogatory and insulting."

Similarly, Joan Walsh on Salon.com said the chocolate Jesus was not "a big deal," and advised people not to go see it if they didn't like it. She called on Imus to be fired.

Even New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg said "don't pay any attention" to the chocolate Jesus, but found it necessary to brand Imus' comments "repugnant."

In other words, Catholic bashing is humorous and an exercise in liberty. Racism is awful. Bigotry, then, is neither good nor bad—it just depends who the target is.